

SC 084 Mass Media in American Society
Spring 2012
T Th 12pm, Campion 303

Instructor: Johanna Pabst

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:15pm-2:30pm and by appt

Course Objectives

The power and effect of the media has been long debated, and continues to be important to understand in the context of many changes in American society. This course is dedicated to investigating mass media in America, its nature and role in our lives, and its relation to American notions around race, class and gender. This course will heavily stress the ability to engage critically with the products of mass media from news broadcasts to advertising, from television to the Internet.

As this is a core course, we will be looking at the sociology of mass media with an eye towards the following concerns:



Source: xkcd.com

- 1) **The Perennial Questions:** An examination of mass media can help us think about larger questions in society, such as: How do we know when something is “true”? How open to manipulation are human beings? Is a free society possible?
- 2) **Cultural Diversity:** A number of readings will address the issue of cultural diversity in 21st century society, in order to appreciate the great variety of ethnic, racial, cultural perspectives and influences, as well as the ways the media can both limit and enhance such diversity. **Please note:** This course does not satisfy the official university cultural diversity requirement.
- 3) **Historical Perspective:** We’ll look at the mass media in a historical context, especially with regard to the development of cultural theory and the evolution of media as connected to technology.
- 4) **Methodology:** We’ll pay attention to the various ways the media can be studied, including organizational, interview and content analysis. You’ll learn how to study media from a sociological perspective.

- 5) **Writing Component:** There is a strong writing requirement in this course. You'll be expected to react to the works we read and be able to perform your own analyses of media, as well as integrate the cultural perspectives considered in class.

- 6) **Creating a Personal Philosophy:** You're encouraged to develop your own philosophy about the importance and relevance of mass media, both in your life and in an academic sense. Mass media undoubtedly had a presence in your life before this class. Hopefully, you will view it with a new lens by the end of the course.

Course Requirements

Please silence your cell phones before class!

- 1) **Class Attendance and Participation:** Everyone is expected to attend class and participate in discussions and exercises and on the course blog. I take daily attendance. More than 3 unexcused absences will affect your grade. Excused absences, including approved athletic events, medical appointments, and absences cleared by the dean will not lower your grade as long as they are properly documented (i.e. a note from health services, dean, etc.) I also expect you to arrive to class on time. Repeatedly late arrivals to class are disrespectful to everyone and will also affect your grade.
- 2) **Assigned Reading:** You must come to class having read all assigned material and be prepared to discuss it. You may be expected to lead discussion during the semester. Quizzes or in-class writing assignments may be given to assess reading. I also reserve the right to ask you to read additional short pieces that are relevant to class that I may send you throughout the semester.
- 3) **Reading Responses:** You will be responding weekly to readings and topics by submitting written responses throughout the semester. More detail about the structure of this assignment will be provided.
- 4) **Papers:** There will be 2 paper assignments assigned during the semester. These will be an opportunity for you to critically connect concepts introduced in class with your own experiences, and to conduct research. More detailed assignments will be given out when the time comes. Late papers will be penalized.
- 5) **Exams:** There will be an in-class mid-term and final exam which will cover the core material of the course.

Grading

Your grade will be based on the following elements:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1) Class Attendance and Participation | 10% |
| 2) Reading Responses | 25% |
| 3) 2 papers | 15% each |
| 4) Mid-term Exam | 15% |
| 5) Final Exam | 20% |
| Total: | 100% |

Academic Honesty

You are responsible for adhering to the statement of academic honesty in your Student Handbook and at www.bc.edu/integrity. Plagiarism is a serious offence and any evidence of it, or other breaches of integrity, will be referred to the dean and the Committee on Academic Integrity.

Disability Statement

If you have a disability, please let me know about it at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Keeping in Touch with Me

I encourage you to drop by during my office hours if you have any questions about the readings, assignments, or concepts in general. I am also happy to make appointments outside of these hours. The best way to contact me is through my email listed at the beginning of the syllabus. I check my email frequently and will get back to you as soon as possible.

A note on email form: Please remember that these are professional communications and should be treated as such. Include a subject, sign your name, and use punctuation. Please do not use "hey" in the introduction line to emails. I prefer to be called "Professor Pabst" or "Ms. Pabst." I will always endeavor to treat you with the same level of courtesy.

Required Readings

The following books are available in the BC Bookstore:

- Croteau, David and William Hoynes. *Media/Society*. 4th ed. 2012. Sage.
(abbreviated as **C&H** in the syllabus)
 - Student Study Site: <http://www.sagepub.com/croteau4e/study/intro.htm>
- Dines and Humez, eds. *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*. 3rd ed. 2011. Sage.
(abbreviated as **GRC**)
- Other readings will be available on the Library's Course Reserves (marked as * in the syllabus), or on the course's Blackboard Vista site (marked as **Vista**).

Course Schedule

PART I. WHAT IS MASS MEDIA?

Tu Jan 17 Introduction

Th Jan 19 The Sociology of Media

- **C&H:** Chapter 1, "Media and the Social World," p. 3-17

Tu Jan 24 The Sociology of Media

- **C&H:** Ch. 1, "Media and the Social World," p. 17-28
- **GRC 1:** Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," p. 7-18

Th Jan 26 Ideology and the Production of Ideas

- **C&H:** Ch. 5, "Media and Ideology," p. 153-177
- **GRC 4:** Lull, "Hegemony," p. 33-36
- **GRC 5:** Palmer, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition, An American Fairy Tale," p. 37-43

Tu Jan 31 Ideology cont'd

- *Gitlin, Todd. 1979. "Primetime Ideology: The Hegemonic Process in Television Entertainment," *Social Problems* 26(3), p. 251-266
- **GRC 54:** Ouellette, "'Take Responsibility for Yourself': *Judge Judy* and the Neoliberal Citizen," p. 487- 496
- **GRC 55:** Peck, "The Anxieties of the Enterprising Self and the Limits of Mind Cure in the Age of Oprah," p. 497- 507
- **Reading Response #1 Due**

PART II: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE BUSINESS OF MEDIA

Th Feb 2 The Business of Media

- **C&H:** Chapter 2, "The Economics of the Media Industry," p. 31-70
- **GRC 2:** Winseck, "The State of Media Ownership and Media Markets," p. 19-24

Tu Feb 7 Regulation and the "Public Interest"

- **C&H:** Ch. 3, "Political Influence on Media," p. 71-90, 105-111
- *Habermas, Jurgen, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," p. 136-142
- **Reading Response #2 Due**

Th Feb 9 The News Media and Media Organizations

- **C&H:** Ch. 4, "Media Organizations and Professionals," p. 113-138
- *Boorstin, Daniel, "From News Gathering to News Making: A Flood of Pseudo Events," in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America*, p. 36-44

Tu Feb 14 **Politics**

- **C&H:** Ch. 7, "Media Influence and the Political World," p. 219-244
- **GRC 17:** Warner, "Political Culture Jamming: The Dissident Humor of The Daily Show With Jon Stewart," p. 145-153
- **Reading Response #3 Due**

Th Feb 16 **Advertising and Consumer Culture**

- **C&H:** Ch. 5, p.177- 184
- *Adorno & Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *The Consumer Society Reader*, p. 3-19

Tu Feb 21

- **GRC 22:** Jhally, "Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture," p.199-203
- **GRC 23:** Schor, "The New Politics of Consumption," p. 205-211
- **GRC 27:** Engstrom, "Unraveling the Knot: Political Economy and Cultural Hegemony in Wedding Media," p. 243-253
- **Assignment 1 due in class**

Th Feb 23 **Mid-term Wrap-up and Review**

Feb 28 **IN-CLASS MID-TERM**

Mar 1 **NO CLASS**

Mar 5-9 **SPRING BREAK**

PART III: THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF MEDIA

Tu Mar 13 **Post-Modernism**

- *Baudrillard, Jean, "Simulacra and Simulations," from *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, p. 169-187
- *Poster, Mark. "Postmodern Virtualities," *Body & Society*. 1995. p. 79-95.
 - *Recommended:* *Smith, Philip, "The Cultural Analysis of Postmodernism and Postmodernity," from *Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, p. 214-221

Th Mar 15 **New Media and Technology**

- **C&H:** Ch. 9, "Media Technology," p. 285-308
- **GRC 45:** boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites," p. 409-417

Tu Mar 20 **New Media and Technology**

- **C&H:** Ch. 9, "Media Technology," p. 308- 322
- **GRC 46:** Montgomery, "Born to Be Wired," p. 419-426
- **GRC 47:** Sanbonmatsu, "Video Games and Machine Dreams of Domination," p. 427-436
- **Reading Response #4 Due**

Th Mar 22 Globalization of Media

- **C&H:** Ch. 10: "Media in a Changing Global Culture," p. 325-332
- **GRC 39:** Lemish, "The Future of Childhood in the Global Television Market," p. 355-364
- **GRC 42:** Artz, "Monarchs, Monsters, and Multiculturalism: Disney's Menu for Global Hierarchy," p. 383-388

Tu Mar 27 Globalization of Media

- **C&H:** Ch. 10: "Media in a Changing Global Culture," p. 332-348
- **GRC 50:** Jordan, "Marketing 'Reality to the World,'" p. 459-465
- **GRC 59:** Jenkins, "Pop Cosmopolitanism," p. 545-551
- **Reading Response #5 Due**

PART III. AUDIENCES, REPRESENTATION AND INEQUALITY

Th Mar 29 Content and Media Effects

- **C&H:** Ch. 8, "Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning," p. 255-272
- **GRC 6:** Radway, "Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context," p.45-55
- **GRC 43:** Durham, "Constructing the 'New Ethnicities': Media, Sexuality, and Diaspora Identity in the Lives of South Asian Immigrant Girls," p. 389-397

Tu Apr 3 Active/Critical Reading of Media Texts

- **C&H:** Ch. 8, "Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning," p. 272- 284
- **GRC 7:** Jenkins, "Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten," p. 57-65
- **GRC 14:** Cuklanz and Moorti, "Television's New Feminism: Prime-Time Representations of Women and Victimization," p. 115-126
- **GRC 18:** Padva, "Educating the Simpsons: Teaching Queer Representations in Contemporary Visual Media," p. 155-161
- **Reading Response #6 Due**

Th Apr 5 EASTER BREAK

Tu Apr 10 Race, Class, and Ethnicity

- **C&H:** Ch. 6, "Social Inequality and Media Representation," p. 185-189, 190-201
- **GRC 10:** Hall, "The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," p. 81-84

Th Apr 12 Race, Class, and Ethnicity

- **GRC 52:** Smith, "Critiquing Reality-Based Televisual Black Fatherhood," p. 469-480
- **GRC 11:** McKay and Johnson, "Pornographic Eroticism and Sexual Grotesquerie in Representations of African American Sportswomen," p. 85-94
- **GRC 35:** Rose, "'There are Bitches and Hoes,'" p. 321-325

Tu Apr 17 **Race, Class, and Ethnicity**

- **C&H:** Ch. 6, p. 205-212
- **GRC 13:** Butsch, "Ralph, Fred, Archie, Homer, and the King of Queens: Why Television Keeps Recreating the Male Working-Class Buffoon," p. 101-109
- **GRC 3:** Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs," p.25
- **Reading Response #7 Due**

Th Apr 19 **Gender & Sexuality**

- **C&H:** Ch. 6, p. 201- 205, 212- 215
- **GRC 29:** Katz, "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity," p. 261-269
- **GRC 49:** Bertozzi, "'You Play Like a Girl': Cross-Gender Competition and the Uneven Playing Field," p. 443-454

Tu Apr 24 **Gender & Sexuality**

- **GRC 9:** Gerhard, "Sex and the City: Carrie Bradshaw's Queer Postfeminism," p. 75-79
- **GRC 34:** Caputi, "The Pornography of Everyday Life," p. 311-320
- **GRC 28:** Gill, "Supersexualize Me! Advertising and the Midriff," p. 255-260
- **Assignment 2 due in class**

Th Apr 26 **Gender & Sexuality**

- **GRC 20:** Nylund, "When in Rome: Heterosexism, Homophobia, and Sports Talk Radio," p. 171-183
- **GRC 38:** Pratt, "'This is the Way We Live and Love!': Feeding on and Still Hungering for Lesbian Representation in The L Word," p. 341-348
- **GRC 58:** Moore, "Resisting, Reiterating, and Dancing Through: The Swinging Closet Doors of Ellen DeGeneres' Televised Personalities," p. 531-540

Week 14:

Tu May 1 **Lingering Debates/Issues and Media Reform**

- *Gamson, Joshua and Pearl Latteier, "Do Media Monsters Devour Diversity?" *Contexts*, Summer 2004, p. 26-32
- *McChesney, Robert. 2008. "The Media Reform Movement Going Forward." *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*, Ch. 23.
- **Reading Response #8 Due**

Th May 3 **Wrap-Up and Review**

FINAL EXAM: Mon, May 14

9 am